



The Homestead Act

By:

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WELCOME TO THE PRAIRIE

“An act to secure Homesteads to actual Settlers on the Public Domain.”

The Homestead Act was enacted by the US Senate and House of Representatives and our sixteenth President, Abraham Lincoln. Its purpose was to get settlers out to the west. The Homestead Act said that if you were the head of a family, or above the age of twenty one, you could get one hundred and sixty acres of very cheap land. \$1.25 was the payment for the one hundred and sixty acres. But before the land was officially yours, you had to live there for four years. This was called “proving up”.



No School?



This link leads to the real document of the homestead act.

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=012/llsl012.db&recNum=423>

However, if you served in the Army or Navy, you could subtract the time you spent at war from the proving up years. The settlers had no idea how hard it was to live on the prairie. The Homestead Act convinced many people to travel out onto the prairie. It was one of the most effective advertising **campaigns** in history.

When the pioneers finally reached their designated area, the family would set down their luggage and rest. But when they got up, there was much to do. The children's chores were to gather firewood and wash clothes with their mother. The children back then sometimes did not go to school.

Instead they fed the cattle and gathered the chickens' eggs, if the family had any. The mother's chores were to clean clothes and towels, make their breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and to clean the dishes including pots, pans, glasses and plates along with other eating utensils. The father's and other men's work was to find land on which to build their houses and work on other public projects like building a railroad. This enabled them to earn money quickly.

SECTION 2

Proving Up

Proving up meant that you had to live on that piece of land for exactly four years and make an improvement on the land.

In order to make an “improvement” on the land, you would have to build a house (sod house, or log cabin) and grow a crop.

Some unfortunate settlers could not make an improvement on the land. When the fourth year came along they would have to head back east.



Are you tough enough to stay in the west?

Test Your knowledge

Question 3 of 3

How much money would it take to purchase your own land?

- ☐ A. \$ 0.25
- ☐ B. \$ 25.10
- ☐ C. \$ 5.00
- ☒ D. \$1.25



Check Answer



HOUSING AND CROPS



Some families had enough money to build a log cabin or a wooden house with windows and doors. But the families who were less fortunate had to dig a dugout or make a sod house. The sod house format that was popular was in a T. For some people the **dugout** or **sod house** was worse because when it rained the roof would leak and during a tornado, the roof could be ripped off by the strong winds. Some people believed that the wooden or log cabin was the worst because the whole house could be picked up and carried away by the strong winds.

How to Make a Sod House

The sod was a blessing to the pioneers, because there were no trees or stone in sight to use as building materials. Therefore the sod was the perfect solution. The **sod** was free and accessible for the pioneers.

When you would build your sod house you would want to make it next to a hill because if it was in the middle of a prairie you would be exposed to wind with no wind blocks.

First you would have to mark out your walls and the shape of the house.

Then you would cut the sod just enough for one day (because if you got more it would dry up.)

Clear the grass for your house to rest.

Lay the sod root side up and straight and then sideways and repeat.

When the day ends and it is time to rest, make a dugout home in case it rains or it is cold.

When you are ready to make your windows you make a space. Then put them in and keep on stacking the sod.

When you are ready to make your roof you start off by laying wooden rods across the top of your house. Then cover the poles with cedar planks and sod.

Your sod house is now finished.



Housing and Crops



This is a picture of the doorframe and the first row of sod. #BestSodHouse



Review Housing and Crops

Question 1 of 4

Where do you want to build your sod house?

- ☐ A. In the middle of a prairie
- ☒ B. Next to a hill
- ☐ C. Next to a river



Check Answer





This is a picture of Solomon Butcher the famous photographer next to his sod shanty.

OFF TO TOWN



If the crops did not burn down in a prairie fire or get eaten in the year of the grasshopper plague, when the crops were done growing the fathers or men in the family would take a trip to town carrying their crops and whatever the family made to sell. The trip to town would usually take one to two days.

The way to town was a very dull trip. Though it would not be as dull as just driving a wagon and not saying anything because the pioneers had songs including “Starving to Death on a Government Claim”, “Little old Sod Shanty on My Claim” and many more songs.

These are the lyrics for Starving to death on a Government Claim:

Frank Baker’s my name, and a bachelor I am.

I’m keeping old batch on an elegant plan.

You’ll find me out west in the county of Lane,

A’starving to death on a government claim.

My house is constructed of natural soil,

The walls are erected according to Hoyle,

The roof has no pitch, but is level and plain,

And I never get wet till it happens to rain.

Hurrah for Lane County, the land of the free,

The home of the Grasshopper, bedbug and flea.

I’ll holler its praises and sing of its fame,

While starving to death on a government claim.

How happy I am when I crawl into bed,

The rattlesnakes rattling a tune at my head,

While the gay little centipede so void of all fear,

Crawls over my neck, and into my ear.

*And the gay little bedbug so cheerful and bright,
He keeps me a-going two thirds of the night.*

*My cloths are all ragged, my language is rough,
my bread is case-hardened, both solid and tough,
The dough is all scattered all over the room,
And the floor would scared at the sight of a broom.*

*The dishes are scattered all over the bed,
All covered with sorghum and government bread;
Still I have a good time and I live at my ease
On common sop sorghum and bacon and cheese.*

*How happy I am on my government claim,
I've nothing to lose, I've nothing to gain,
I've nothing to eat and I've nothing to wear,
And nothing from nothing is honest and fair.*

Oh, here I am safe, so here I will stay,

My money's all gone, and I can't get away.

*There's nothing to make a man hard and profane
Like starving to death on a government claim.*

*Now come to Lane county, there's room for you all,
Where the wind never ceases and the rains never fall.
Come join in our chorus to sing for its fame,
You sinners that're stuck on your government claim.*

*Now hurrah for Lane county, where blizzards arise,
The wind never ceases and the moon never rise,
Where the sun never sets, but it always remains
Till it burns us all out on our government claims.*

*Now don't get discouraged, you poor hungry men,
You're all just as free as the pig in the pen,
Just stick to your homestead and battle the fleas,
And look to your maker to send you a breeze.*

*Hurrah for Lane county, the land of the West,
Where the farmers and labors are ever at rest;
There's nothing to do but to stick and remain,
And starve like a dog on a government claim.*

*Now, all you poor sinners, I hope you will stay,
And chew the hard rag till you're toothless and gray,
But as for myself I'll no longer remain
To starve like a dog on a government claim.*

*Farewell to Lane County, farewell to the West,
I'll travel back east to the girl I love best;
I'll stop at Missouri and get me a wife,
Then live on corn dodgers the rest of my life.*

This is another pioneer song that is also very popular, it is called **"Little Old Sod Shanty"**

Chorus:

*The hinges are of leather and the windows have no glass,
While the board roof lets the howling blizzards in,
And I hear the hungry coyote as he slinks up through the grass
Round that little old sod shanty on my claim.*

*Yet I rather like the novelty of living this way,
Though my bill of fare is always rather tame,
But I'm happy as a clam on the land of Uncle Sam,
In the little old sod shanty on my claim.*

*But when I left my eastern town a bachelor so gay,
To try to win my way to wealth and fame,
I little thought I come down to burning twisted hay,
In the little old sod shanty on my claim.*

*My clothes are plastered o'er with dough, I'm looking like a
fright*

*And everything is scattered round the room,
but I wouldn't give the freedom that I have out in the west,
For the table of the eastern man's old home*

*Still I wish some kind hearted girl would pity on me take,
and relieve me of the mess that I am in;
The angel how'd I bless her if this the home she make,
In the little old sod shanty on my claim.*

*Our hogs they died of cholera, our chickens had the pip;
The baby swallowed buttons like a chain,
My wife was married thirteen years before she saw a dime,
When we live in that sod shanty on the claim.*

*Yet for all the hardships we went through we never gave up
hope,
But plugged the harder till we made it gain,
For love was close beside us for all our ups and downs,
In that little old sod shanty on the claim*



This is the song
Little Old Sod Shanty on My Claim.

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Cya-2AXg0E>)

Little Old Sod shanty



IT'S TOO HARD

Many people thought it was just a breeze to be a pioneer in the eighteenth century. They were wrong. The homesteader's life was tough.

Over time it became harder and harder to be a pioneer. You had to be truly tough. Many people were not, and that was why they gave up and headed back east.

Sometimes they left for other reasons. People would run short on money or their crops would be destroyed in a blaze of flames.

If that were to happen the family would try to sell their cattle to keep their lives in the west. However, at some point they would be declined and have to leave the mystical land of the west

This is a quote from a pioneer in the 1800's





This man is the first homesteader. He is Union Soldier Daniel Freeman. The land office opened at 12:00a.m. to start giving out the 160 acres of land. He ordered his claim to what is now Beatrice, Nebraska.

Prairie Settlement



This is a picture of Eleanor B. Cook standing next to her “trophy” of rattlesnakes. #Homesteading1910

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Chapter 1

Picture of family mixing something www.nebraskastudies.org

Section 1

Picture of a little girl spreading seeds http://historicwintersburg.blogspot.com/2012_04_01_archive.html

Page 3

Picture of sod house www.nebraskastudies.org

Page 4

Picture of sod house http://historicwintersburg.blogspot.com/2012_04_01_archive.html

Page 6

Picture of wagon heading to town <http://www.bvskiarea.com/wagonrides.html>

Page 10 Picture of prairie fire <http://www.lifevesting.com/blog/2012/05/what-it-means-to-be-forgiven/>

Interactive It's too hard.1



Thanks for
reading this
Ebook!

I would like to dedicate this
Ebook to my principal,
Mrs. Gomez.

Campaigns

campaign

noun

1 military operation(s), maneuver(s); crusade, war, battle, offensive, attack.

2 the campaign to reduce vehicle emissions: crusade, drive, push, struggle; operation, strategy, battle plan.

verb

1 they are campaigning for political reform: crusade, fight, battle, push, press, strive, struggle, lobby.

2 she campaigned as a political outsider: run for office, stand for office, canvass, barnstorm, electioneer, stump, go on the hustings.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

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Find Term

Chapter 1 - No School?

Domain

domain

noun

1 they extended their domain: realm, kingdom, empire, dominion, province, territory, land.

2 the domain of art: field, area, sphere, discipline, province, world.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

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Find Term

Chapter 1 - Welcome to the Prairie

Dugout

dug·out [duhg-out]

noun

A rough shelter or dwelling formed by an excavation in the ground, in the face of a bank, in the side of a hill, etc.,especially one used by soldiers.

Related Glossary Terms

Sod house

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Find Term

Housing and Crops - Housing and Crops

Sod

sod |sädl

noun

1 the surface of the ground, with the grass growing on it.

2 a piece of this, usually sold in rolls and used to start a new lawn, athletic field, etc.

verb (sods, sodding , sodded) [with obj.]

cover with sod or pieces of turf: the stadium has been sodded.

PHRASES

the old sod of one's native country.

under the sod dead and buried in a grave.

Related Glossary Terms

Sod house

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Find Term

Housing and Crops - Housing and Crops

Sod house

sod house

noun

a house built of strips of sod, laid like brickwork, and used especially by settlers on the Great Plains, when timber was scarce.

Also called soddie, soddy.

Origin:

1825–35

Related Glossary Terms

Dugout, Sod

Index

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Housing and Crops - Housing and Crops